

The People of Tokugawa Japan: The State of the Field in Early Modern Social/Economic History

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Early Modern Social and Economic History of Japan: The Tokugawa Legacy

Post war historians of Japanese socio-economic history argued extensively in favor of a Japanese version of the Whig perspective on history in which practically everything in the Tokugawa early modern leads to the modern age of Japan as an indigenous and stable evolution. Many of us in the field who are dealing with the Tokugawa period have also been greatly intrigued by the politicized question of Japanese global power or at least its dramatic beginnings with the 1868 Meiji Restoration, a kind of a revolution that catapulted Japan alone among the countries of Asia into the company of the great powers of the West. It is therefore not surprising that in her recent accomplished geo-historical study of the social and economic processes of proto-industry in early modern Japan, Kären Wigen begins with similar concerns in her recent book, *The Making of a Japanese Periphery, 1750-1920*, (1995). In discussing the peripheralization of the Ina Valley in South Shinano an arena that links the Tokugawa and post Meiji periods through the perspective of global market forces, Wigen comments aptly, "Japanese development poses one of the more insistent puzzles of modern history: how an isolated and decentralized state, far from the European heartland, managed to metamorphose in a few short decades into a formidable global power."¹ While the Whig interpretation suggests continuity and a smooth transition, Wigen suggests a sharp break.

Here I treat the socio-economic history of the "early modern," covering roughly the years 1600-1868, the Tokugawa period through the Meiji Restoration, but the broad question remains, how

does one assess the relative balance between breaking points and discontinuities as we move from "early-modern" to "modern" Japan? For a long time, post-war scholarship in English joined the two periods so much so that it seemed as if the Tokugawa age was in a "Catholic marriage," not only with the Meiji developments as its origin, preparation, and transition, but also with post-1945, contemporary Japan. The major controversy that underlines post-war research on socio-economic history has been whether the Tokugawa legacy acted as a critical factor causing the "failure" of modernity in Japan or as a positive factor that illuminates the "successes" of a Japanese style of modernity.

My generally chronological overview of the major issues and interpretations in the field of socio-economic history will assess studies that focus primarily on the commoner population of Tokugawa Japan. Ever since the nineteen fifties scholars have allocated special weight to the history of peasants and landlords in rural Japan for it is in this rural setting that the major conceptual arguments about Japan's Tokugawa experience have developed in a comparative framework, juxtaposed with the history of the West as a divergent form of feudalism or as the early foundation of the "modern." Beginning in the eighties, the field has advanced our understanding of the lives of ordinary people beyond the rice fields. The history of merchants and artisans in urban everyday life, the understanding of the culture of sexuality and gender, the social and economic world of the forest and the seas in the Japanese archipelago have followed *en suite* to enrich our knowledge of the variety and complexity of Tokugawa society.

Scholars agree that Tokugawa people had to operate within well-defined boundaries of class, status, and power, partly because of the relative constancy of Japan's geographic borders and the dearth of serious violent challenge to the order for some 250 years. The main outline of the socio-economic history of the population living under a feudal ethos has been described quite aptly since Sir George Sansom's *History of Japan*. But post-war research in English has become increasingly capable of presenting the complex inner workings of how people lived, and the procedures they activated within the institutions of

¹ Kären Wigen, *The Making of a Japanese Periphery 1750-1920*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. xiii.

the Tokugawa body politic.

The question of what constitutes the social and economic “early modern” in Japanese history is problematic as “early modern” is a term that, in common usage, assumes the history of Europe as the underlying determinant of the concept. What historians recognize as “early modern” in world history covers the period from about the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century and invariably takes developments in Europe from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment, and the early Industrial and Scientific Revolutions as the primary mover in the generation of early modern conditions. There is a continuous debate in world history about whether episodes comparable to the historical experience of Europe took place in other parts of the world. Common denominators used by historians in general (including those who study Japan) as indicative of the early modern temper of any society include the following: First, historians indicate that an increasing concentration of political power in a centralized form of government (European “absolutism”) tended to replace the grass-roots hereditary power of local magnates who were typically connected to central authority in a federative framework that was dependent upon feudal ties of vassalage or some other form of reciprocal dependency. Second, the same early modern process is generally held to be in line with the more widespread circulation of goods and services seen in Europe, the emergence of a “commercialized market economy” domestically, and “mercantilism” in international contexts. Finally, the early modern era also witnesses increasing numbers of towns and cities that reflect a social and economic culture of urbanity. In European history, the free towns and townsmen of the early modern era in European states are seen to be source for the political and social evolution of civil society and our notions and traditions of freedom and liberty.

In Japanese history, the English literature suggests the early modern begins politically when the national rulers of the country beginning with Hideyoshi in the sixteenth century started to take direct measures to exercise the authority to tax and oversee the village administration of the peasants. Centralization in Japan took place as establishing domain government authority over all of the population. By the early seventeenth

century, the Tokugawa Shoguns and local daimyo domain lords completed the establishment of the *kokudaka* total yield and tax allotment registers and the *shūmon aratame chō* registers of religious affiliation for each village. For historians dealing with the Tokugawa period as “early modern,” both developments form the basic indicators of “early modernity” by identifying procedures with which the social and the economic processes of Japanese history were closely connected to political authority until the end of the Tokugawa period.

What especially marks the Japanese experience in this narrative as reflective of early modern processes is that governmental measures to control the population and regular inflow of tax went hand in hand with social measures to establish hereditary status distinctions that divided the population into the politically privileged ruling class of samurai, and the commoner population who were sub-divided into peasants, artisans, and merchants. Hideyoshi’s Sword Hunt (1588), which banned the use of arms by the commoners and relegated that privilege to the warrior class, is taken as the seminal event in this freezing of the classes. The edict was followed by the Tokugawa removal of samurai from the countryside into urban centers, where they became the standing armies and bureaucratic personnel of the Tokugawa and daimyo governments.

Second World War scholarship had been critical of the Japanese experience as a negative, divergent process filled with hallmarks of her failure to become truly early modern in the idealized European historical narrative of a politically liberal process that was economically nurtured by the emergence of free market “capitalism” and socially determined by the rise of the urban bourgeoisie and the rights and a free citizenry. This negative view of Tokugawa Japan was best represented in E. H. Norman’s classic study of the origins of the modern state. Norman argued that the combination of centralized power with a rigid social hierarchy under a military class was a special problem of Japanese early modernity that diverged from the European experience. For those such as Norman who saw Japan in light of Pearl Harbor, the Tokugawa experience created a legacy of feudal elements in political organization and social rigidities that originated with the Sword Hunt and similar measures under “central-

ised feudalism.” These legacies were incorporated in the new political organization and were the basis for Meiji state formation. The persistence of Japanese centralized feudalism into the nineteenth century was the basis for the authoritarian character of modern Japan that led to militarism and imperialism; the distortion of the early modern in Japanese history explained the failure of democracy and the rise of fascism. Even recently, the doyen of Japanese history, William G. Beasley commented that the authoritarian social and economic measures which we have described as the mark of the “early modern” in Japanese history, “tried to stop the clock of history” and that the feudal ethos of government continued throughout the era, implying that Japan’s early modern experience was unlike the European one that charts the “clock of history” in our minds.²

This was the standard view of Tokugawa history for a long time, particularly until the advent of post-war research that re-evaluated the whole phenomena in a more positive light. Post war scholarship has countered the Norman view first by a conceptualization of Japanese social and economic history that ascribes a special, privileged and positive role to the emergence of the peasant village community and its economic growth. With the dissolution of the ancient *shōen* (manorial estates), increases in agricultural productivity came about through the application of improved irrigation and better methods of cultivation that can be traced back to the 13th century, but it is really from the sixteenth century on that autonomous village communities become the basis of agrarian social and economic life. Encouraged by the Pax Tokugawa, peasants regularly produced, generation after generation, an increase in yields and undertook significant expansion in the acreage under cultivation (paddy fields under cultivation increased from around 946,000 *chō* in 1450, to 2,970,000 *chō* around 1720.³ This increased output underlay population growth from an estimated ten to twelve million in

the later sixteenth century to about thirty million by 1700. This permitted the increased market orientation of the economy (the second hallmark of “early modernity”) with all its positive and negative components. Historians have viewed this development as a generally “positive” factor that helped dismantle the grip of centralized feudalism on the society and economy.

A related issue that attracted significant attention has been the sixteenth-century emergence of castle towns that provided the initial urban setting which encouraged the expansion of commercial activities within and beyond domain borders. Whether or not these castle-towns “could” become the bastions of political liberty and civil society (as in the European experience) while under the firm control of the military ruling class, for example, constituted one of the major questions concerning the character of early modern Japanese history.

Finally, it is difficult to decide which events end the “early modern” era in Japanese history given the selective definition given above. A personal interpretation suggests that certainly the institution of the Meiji land survey in 1869, and the new Land Tax of 1872, in addition to the abolishing of the feudal laws concerning the social status traditions of the Tokugawa era during the same years, stand out as dramatic events which end the “early modern” in legal and institutional terms in Japanese history. Yet, research also indicates that the social and economic dynamics of everyday life and production appear to have lasted well beyond the 1868 Meiji Restoration.

Rural History: The Peasant Village and Agrarian Origins

Early post-war research produced excellent works that treated the history of peasants, merchants, or local history with an emphasis on tracing Japan’s rocky road to modernity beneath the samurai world of governmental institutions and political power. The regional study of Bizen by John W. Hall portrayed the local conditions in the context of regional power from early times

² W. G. Beasley, *The Japanese Experience: A Short History of Japan*, London: Phoenix Press, 1999, p. 152.

³ One *chō* is about one hectare. Conrad Totman, *A History of Japan*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000, p. 233.

through the early Tokugawa period.⁴ William Chambliss's Chiarajima village study brought to life for the first time the everyday in a peasant community – the intricacies of the social, economic, and inner-village institutional worlds.⁵ James Nakamura revealed the concealed Tokugawa production that underlay the Meiji economy.⁶ For the earlier period, Charles Sheldon traced the “Rise of the Merchant Class” in his study of the Tokugawa period, a study that remained for a long time the only major work that addressed the problematic impact of the merchants in Japan's early modern and modern development. Tetsuo Najita's seminal article on Oshio Heihachirō in the Craig and Shively volume, *Personality in Japanese History*, stands as the singular case of a study of an individual rebel who was not a peasant.⁷ These were milestones in the scholarship of early-modern/modern Japan that shifted our focus to the world below the sea of a dominant concern for the modernist impetus scholars located in the hands of the samurai political leadership.

However, most post war English-language scholarship consisted of studies on the samurai aristocracy, and the modernist agenda was ascribed to the “positive” role of elite institutions in Tokugawa history. This story painted a Japan able to modernize in a way that was a model of stability and evolution, one that was comparable to Europe, viable and constructive rather than destructively revolutionary. This was a sharp contrast to the critical appraisal of the Norman generation. The classic series produced by the Conference on Modern Japan (published by Princeton

University Press in six volumes from 1965-1971) represents the parameters of the argument. The series incorporates the scholarly research of a whole generation of Japan scholars: John W. Hall, Donald Shively, Marius B. Jansen, William Lockwood, Ronald P. Dore, Robert E. Ward, James W. Morley, Edwin Reichauer, and others. The scholarship evaluated the scope of Japanese history from the Tokugawa to the post-war era from the vantage point of modernization theory and stood in critical opposition to contemporary Japanese scholars such as Maruyama Masao, Toyama Shigeki and Kawashima Takeyoshi.

Within this context, the Tokugawa tradition and its legacy in the modern era emerged in a better light during the nineteen sixties and early nineteen seventies than that in which it had been cast by historians such as Norman. One has to note that this was primarily reflective of the post-war scholarship of the United States. This perspective was part of a larger debate in the States that constructed a positive image of Japan as a successful model of modernization for the “free world,” one where native tradition gave birth to European-like processes without the need for imitation. Donald Shively commented, “On the surface Japan appears to have turned away from her past traditions to follow Western models. But a close examination of the individual cases dealt with here reveals that the general product owed more than might be suspected to the quality of Japanese tradition.”⁸ The publication of Robert Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion*, traced a Japanese form of Protestant ethic in Tokugawa Japan. Subsequently, Albert M. Craig's seminal work on Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration pointed out the strength of the samurai feudal elements that enabled the “power of the Meiji state to respond successfully to the challenge of the West.”⁹ Herbert Bix reminds us astutely of the atmosphere back then with his opening line in *Peasant Protest in Japan 1590-1884* (1986), that just after World War II, “scholarly writing by Westerners

⁴ John Whitney Hall, *Government and Local Power in Japan 500-1700: A Study Based on Bizen Province*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996 (reprint).

⁵ William Chambliss, *Chiarajima Village: Land Tenure, Taxation, and Local Trade, 1811-1884*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1964.

⁶ James Nakamura, *Agricultural Production and the Economic Development of Japan 1873-1922*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

⁷ Tetsuo Najita, “Oshio Heihachirō (1793-1837)” in Albert M. Craig, and Donald Shively, eds. *Personality in Japanese History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970.

⁸ Donald H. Shively, ed., *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, p. xiii.

⁹ Albert M. Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 353.

on Japan centered largely on its great tradition of elite politics and high culture. Interest in the vast majority who were peasants and workers was slow to develop.¹⁰

There were significant exceptions. Thomas Smith, whose seminal *Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan* (1959), is the first postwar study which looked at the people, translated mostly at this stage as the peasantry, on their own terms, arguing that peasants contributed to modernity not just in terms of surplus and economic value, but also socially. The Tokugawa peasants of Smith's study adapted themselves to the dictates of the market and proceeded to construct a productive agrarian economy and rural industry through improvements in technology and methods of cultivation. Most significant is his argument about social change. The social mode of production shifted from the extended family cooperative to the individual nuclear family. Smith's emphasis on the break-up of the old and the consequent release of energies afforded by high social mobility in the countryside, also provided the source of political conflict that challenged the traditional village power structure. Smith concludes with an image of rural Japan that serves as the training ground for the modern laborer, entrepreneur, and politician in the new Japan. The village is the progenitor of the social and economic dynamic in the modern era.¹¹

Studies of Rebellion and Conflict

The larger paradigm of Tokugawa socioeconomic history is the continuing debates over the relative prominence of poverty and subsistence-level existence versus rising standards of living and economic growth in the villages, and over the role of demographic patterns which can be interpreted differently depending on which interpretation a scholar follows. The debate broke out with the major studies of Susan Hanley and Kozo Yamamura, which followed the significant

arguments of Thomas Smith and James Nakamura. These studies mapped out a Tokugawa history of agrarian growth, commercialization, and the accumulation of surplus in a concealed economy. Kozo Yamamura outlined the decline in samurai income, a trend that led many to join commoners and engage in cottage industry and other kinds of employment.¹² Hanley has furthered the "rising living standards" perspective in *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan* (1997), by arguing that standards of physical well being – sanitary conditions and efficient use of resources – in a material culture that created a general quality of life for Tokugawa peasants on a par with that of the English workers during the industrial revolution.¹³ She argues against the formal estimates of Japan's per capita income on the eve of pre-war industrialization, and is critical of the crude measurement of per capita income used by mainstream economic analysis. She argues that it is an inappropriate standard, pointing to the absence of goods traded in the international market and, more importantly, cultural preferences and changing tastes within Japan's pre-modern culture.

The argument of those in the accumulation-of-surplus-and growth camp stresses the statistical revelation of a concealed surplus resulting from agrarian growth and the inability of the early modern state to revise the tax structure to capture gains from the growing economy – an act accomplished later in draconian fashion under the Meiji Restoration. If we accept this premise, the Tokugawa people achieved an improvement in living conditions through an "Industrious Revolution," to adopt Hayami Akira's well-known terminology. All these factors are seen to have sustained a growing population until the end of the eighteenth century, and increases in commoners' wealth continued, albeit on uneven terms, with

¹⁰ Herbert P. Bix, *Peasant Protest in Japan 1590-1884*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, p. xiii.

¹¹ Thomas C. Smith, *Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959.

¹² Kozo Yamamura, *A Study of Samurai Income and Entrepreneurship*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974; Susan B. Hanley and Kozo Yamamura, *Economic and Demographic Change in Preindustrial Japan 1600-1868*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

¹³ Susan Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 21.

the very well off coexisting with those clearly impoverished.¹⁴

Given the “attraction” of discovering a gradual tax decline relative to the increased agrarian production in addition to rising commercial and industrial income, the growth argument has still needed to acknowledge the fragility of conditions for most and the class differences between landlords/wealthy peasants and tenants, as well as the poverty of significant sections of the peasant population and the vulnerability of the bulk of the producers and city dwellers to fluctuating ecological and market conditions. The debate reflects issues beyond Tokugawa history, e.g., whether the Industrial Revolution, starting with the West, has brought with it an immediate rise in the standard of living or any benefits at all for the majority of the people.

The two opposing views, one stressing growth-oriented Tokugawa social behaviour, the other poverty, often emphasize different aspects of the same phenomenon – market fluctuations. In Takaino, the very same peasants who presumably were making tidy sums in the eighteen sixties producing silkworm egg cards for the international market were listed as destitute on the eve of the 1871 Nakano uprising because of a collapse in the export market. As Edward Pratt indicates, this volatility was typical, even for villagers who engaged only in domestic commerce before the opening of international trade.¹⁵

For critics of the growth perspective, the impoverished members of a Tokugawa society riven by class contradictions and increasing tenantization become the exploited base of cheap labor that marks the crisis-ridden body politic of early modern Japan. Those who assume this perspective point to the practice of *mabiki* (infanticide) as a sign of the inability of the average peasant family to survive the market forces and the widening, glaring gap between the rich and poor. Totman projects a significant challenge to the

rising-expectations-and-growth model by firmly pointing his finger at the increase in self-exploitation of human labor. In his critical review of studies of Tokugawa peasants, he reacts to the use of the language of extreme rationalization of free-market economism employed by some scholars who interpret infanticide as voluntary birth control.¹⁶ In his study of Akita forestry, Totman also points to the fundamental question of what prompts humans to act at all, and what level of ecological disaster must befall a society before it is moved to confront its problems. The depletion of the Akita forest in northwest Honshu resulting from population pressure and the need for timber to support urban growth could be reversed only after the trauma of the Temmei famine (1781-88) forced commoners and authorities to take significant reforestation measures during the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Such analyses provide further evidence of the subsistence-level existence of many Japanese peasants who frequently succumbed to the forces of nature in famines, earthquakes, floods, and epidemics as well as fluctuations of a commercialised economy. In such conditions, even small shifts made the difference between survival and death.

None of the scholars working in the field have solved the issues of growth, poverty, conflict, and their mutual relationship to perfect satisfaction, nor has either side, although opinion appears to lean toward acknowledgment of the primacy of growth in the market economy. So the question remains: Does the growth in the market economy engender an improvement in the conditions of commoners, albeit at unequal levels, or is it the actual cause of increased poverty and class contradictions. I find that in the case of Takaino, economic shifts helped the traditionally poor mountain peasants attain a degree of independence as taxpayers. I also think that the of poor

¹⁴ On demographic issues, see Satomi Kurosu's review of recent literature in *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 10:1 (Spring 2002), pp. 3-21.

¹⁵ *Japan's Proto-industrial Elite: The Economic Foundations of the Gōnō*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.

¹⁶ Conrad Totman, “Tokugawa Peasants: Win, Loose, Draw?” *Monumenta Nipponica* 41:4 (1986): 457-476.

¹⁷ Conrad Totman, *The Origins of Japan's Modern Forests: The Case of Akita*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984; Conrad Totman, *The Green Archipelago: Forestry in Pre-industrial Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

tenant and *mizunomi* ("landless") peasants in many Shinano villages who are frequently seen as the product of recent social and economic contradictions, were not the social products of late Tokugawa market forces but had been there from the beginning as part of an old-fashioned mode of land tenure. At least in Takaino, most *nauke* (peasants who received "names" and were listed in village land registers) had been *mizunomi* originally and had gained sufficient "status" over time by expanding their economic assets to become registered peasants.

Some consensual points emerge from the debate about the nature of the socio-economic change in the Tokugawa society. First, I think all would agree that the formation of a new socio-economic order was "married" to the move toward political centralization and the foundations of both the national government, the Tokugawa *bakufu*, and the domain polities in the early sixteenth century. Hence, a study of the socio-economic layer in Tokugawa Japan cannot be divorced from the political history of the country.¹⁸ Second, the fundamental structure of the Tokugawa *modus vivendi* with the people regarding taxes and the implementation of social controls may have been shaken by conflict at times, but the institutions themselves remained intact. If the special form of centralization in the federative framework of the *Baku-han* order is the thematic concern of the debate on early modern political history, how people operated within its remarkably "frozen" structure of *de facto* and *de jure* boundaries constitute the foundation within which scholars debate in the socio-economic realm.

There are also some agreed-upon "building blocks" of the debate. We know that the land surveys and *kenchi-chō* cadastral registers of *koku-daka*, total yield, and *shumon aratame-chō* registers of religious affiliation established a stable system of controls over a taxpayer peasantry. The registration of the total population in a closed system of class and status between the samurai, peasant, artisan, merchant, and subgroups such as the outcastes constituted a static social environ-

ment where, with some exceptions, social mobility between the classes through wealth, marriage, or merit was no longer possible. For the historians it is the inner village contradictions that appear to be the only source for mobility and conflict, representing the "catalyst" of "historical action".

This was also a remarkably non-violent society in contrast to its contemporaries in Europe or Asia. After all, there were no wars. The removal of the samurai from land, and their transformation into an urban military-bureaucratic class in service of the domain and Tokugawa governments, and the demilitarization of the peasantry resulted in the elimination of armed warfare and a stable political and military environment. This state of affairs was one major reason for the inability of the Tokugawa peasants to win dramatic victories against the ruling class. Nor were they the subjects or the objects of extreme bloodshed and "religious/ethnic cleansing" such as the armed warfare during the Peasant War in Germany or the Taiping Rebellion in China. Finally, we must note that the samurai constituted an unusually high proportion of the total population, close to 10 percent, which implies that no matter how flexible the praxis of law and authority may be, Tokugawa subjects were under the control of a very large armed military power.

There were further constraints in the socio-economic sphere. The mode of production of the Tokugawa producer was determined, constrained if you will, by "self-exploitation" of the human body and the collective solidarity of the family-community network. Tokugawa peasants and laborers did not have available to them extensive labor-energy of draft animals for farm work, nor the low cost camel or donkey for transportation (although the horse was used for transporting goods in some regions). This meant that increases in productivity depended upon better use of resources, innovations in technology (limited) and dissemination of existing know-how. But it also meant that producers had to increase working hours and concentrate on close regulation of the individual and the collective to get the maxi-

¹⁸ James White, *Ikki: Social Conflict and Political Protest in Early Modern Japan*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 63.

mum results.¹⁹

Nonetheless, the society also faced several crises: three major famines, the Kyōhō famine (1732-33), the Temmei famine (1783-87), and the Tempō famine (1832-36). Induced by years of adverse climatic conditions and natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, floods, earthquakes, the Temmei and Tempō especially were periods of widespread social upheaval. And hundreds of thousands, possibly a million died of starvation around the 1788 famine. These crises became arenas of violent confrontation between the countryside and the cities with their commoner and samurai elites.²⁰

Recent studies of early modern social and economic history explore the history of the praxis within the above “building blocks” of the debate, and we are now able to see better the procedural manner in which the population acted within the limits of the system. The emphasis now is on seeing not just how the Tokugawa population increased their labors' output, but also how they manipulated the existing customs of taxation, and put into practice the written and unwritten body of customary law.

As elsewhere, holders of political power in Japan never “intended” to give up the existing exploitative structure, but in the case of the Tokugawa *bakufu*, recent research confirms its inability to radically change the tax customs to benefit the center. By its very terms of power, the *bakufu* in Shinano for example, had to be somewhat lax and in the long run incapable of significantly increasing governmental exploitation of the producers no matter how draconian the meth-

ods.²¹ Philip Brown outlines the practical constraints on early Tokugawa land taxation in his article on annual versus fixed assessments in the Kaga domain. In another article, he introduces discussion of the mismeasure of land in land surveying in the Tokugawa period.²²

Seen in a cumulative manner, starting with the discussion of a gradual decline in taxation by Smith and a similar but less obvious surmise by Chambliss about Chiaraijima, the study of the structure of tax payment and its time-series still constitute the single available tool with which to grasp the nature of early modern exploitation of producers.²³ The fight over taxes between those who pay and those who collect is a litmus test of how much political power from the center was capable of grasping the resources of the economy.

Most would therefore agree by now that the *de facto* tax rate of the Tokugawa *bakufu tenryō* in an average year was only 20 percent of the total yield (and maybe lower). That the additional burden was placed on the population through *goyōkin* (“thank you money”, the term used for extraordinary levies, nominally loans) transport costs, and so on is all the more understandable in view of the limitation on raising land taxes to any significant degree. This situation also explains the stiff opposition to these extra levies especially in times of distress. But there were limits to how much the *bakufu* could extract through extra levies as well. Furushima, who actually does not take the Tokugawa period overall yield increase into consideration in his article in the early modern Japan volume of the Cambridge history, still provides a good example of the Tokugawa gov-

¹⁹ Some authors declare that this displaced leisure time, but I am not sure that we can trace the notion of leisure that is specific to our age back to the early modern age so easily.

²⁰ On the other hand Satomi Kurosu, in her bibliographic essay cited above, has shown us that contemporary research in the history of Tokugawa demographic trends has a “nuanced approach” which detects regional differences, followed by sustainable population growth that starts again in the nineteenth century in regions, especially in central Japan, with “advanced” commercialization and relatively higher living standards.

²¹ Selcuk Esenbel, *Even the Gods Rebel: The Peasants of Takaino and the 1871 Nakano Uprising*, Ann Arbor: Association of Asian Studies Monographs 57, 1998.

²² Philip C. Brown, “The Mismeasure of Land: Land Surveying in the Tokugawa Period” *Monumenta Nipponica*. 42:2 (1987): 115-155; “Practical Constraints on Early Tokugawa Land Taxation: Annual Versus Fixed Assessments in Kaga Domain” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14:2 (1988): 369-401.

²³ Thomas C. Smith, “The Land Tax in the Tokugawa Period” *Journal of Asian Studies* 18:1 (1958): 3-19.

ernment's tax dilemma. Furushima provides the 1844 *bakufu* budget revenue figure of a total of 4,011,760 *ryō* (the rice price was roughly 1 *koku* 1 *ryō* for that year); the major portion was provided by the land tax 1,660,000 *ryō*, and most of the rest of the revenue provided by 583,000 *ryō* loan-repayments plus profits from recoinage of 839,000 *ryō*. The 1844 budget indicated that the official *goyōkin* that would be collected from the wealthy producers and merchants was a minor 23,629 *ryō*. Mining provided 62,000 *ryō*, and transportation fees 71,000 *ryō*, both again not close to revenues coming from taxes, loan repayments, and recoinage. The budget also reflects why the government resorted to tinkering with the fiscal system through periodic recoinage, a familiar method of early modern governments elsewhere.²⁴

Finally, when we leap to 1868, the Meiji government collected 2 million *ryō*, which was ostensibly in accordance with the formal *kokudaka* obligation of all *tenryō* lands, but the sum was worth only 300,000 *koku* of rice in the market (1 *koku* was worth 8 *ryō* in 1868), only a quarter of the value in kind of the 1844 tax revenue, revealing the dire straits of the new regime in graphic terms.²⁵

The above may be a somewhat "lean and mean" way to explain our understanding of the taxation framework of the contest between samurai power and the *tenryō* peasantry. In sum, the recent discussions of the peasants' side of the story of Tokugawa Japan have shown an awareness of the limitations of Tokugawa power, especially in the *bakufu* environment.

The late nineteen eighties and the nineteen nineties saw the fruits of what I call the Marcusean generation's earlier interest in ordinary people that revived the "tension-ridden" issues of class conflict in order to highlight the nature of inequity and peasant defiance in Tokugawa society. The list is surprisingly extensive and rather concentrated when one remembers that practi-

cally all are dealing with the conflict issue of the Tokugawa-Meiji transition. It indicates what I think has been the underlying agenda of the conflict scholarship: to present a critical perspective on the question of modern Japan rather than just examining uprisings or revolts: to challenge that "rosy picture" of modernization.

The path breaking articles were those of Irwin Scheiner on "The Mindful Peasant" (1973) and "Benevolent Lords and Honorable Peasants" in *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period* (1978).²⁶ The first of these was followed by Patricia Sippel, "The Bushū Outburst" (1977) and Donald W. Burton on "Peasant Struggle" (1978).²⁷ The provocation for the burst of interest that followed probably came (among other sources) from the revival of Norman's works on Japan (spurred by John Dower) that brought back criticism of Japan as an absolutist semi-feudal entity. Then the edited volume by Najita and Koschmann with the splendid title, *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition* (1982) with contributions from Harootunian, Vlastos, Wilson, and others opened up the conflict debate in a full fledged manner. The book's critical perspective places the Meiji Restoration in a setting of dissenting voices from all classes, including the peasant, merchant, and samurai, and – in the Meiji period – labor, intellectuals, and scientists.²⁸ Mikiso Hane's *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan*

²⁴ Furushima Toshio. 1991 "The Village and Agriculture During the Edo Period" in John Whitney Hall ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan: Volume 4, Early Modern Japan*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 492.

²⁵ Esenbel, *Gods*, p.148.

²⁶ Irwin Scheiner, "The Mindful Peasant: Sketches for a Study of Rebellion," *Journal of Asian Studies*. 32:4 (August 1973): 579-91; "Benevolent Lords and Honorable Peasants: Rebellion and Peasant Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan" in Tetsuo Najita and Irwin Scheiner, eds. *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period 1600-1868*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

²⁷ Patricia Sippel, "Popular Protest in Early Modern Japan: The Bushū Outburst," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 37 (December 1977): 273-322; Donald W. Burton, "Peasant Struggle in Japan, 1590-1760," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 5:2 (1978): 135-171

²⁸ Tetsuo Najita and Victor Koschmann, *Conflict in Modern Japanese History: The Neglected Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

(1982) strongly criticizes the rosy picture of Japan's modernization by shifting attention to the misery, suffering, and exploitation of the population, peasant conflict, dissenting voices, and social discrimination against the outcasts: the "dark picture" that also went into the making of modern Japan.²⁹

The subject of Tokugawa-Meiji peasant conflict has inspired a sizable number of general studies and monographs that used narrative sources on Tokugawa uprisings and village documentation. Initially, the question that intrigued scholars such as Herbert Bix was whether the Tokugawa uprisings were revolutionary, following the classic debate on the subject in Japan since the pre-war era. The issue was difficult to pose for it had a tenuous historical base – no peasant-engineered revolution took place in Japan on a par with the revolutions in China and Mexico. Hence, in the Japanese case, the search has been more to decipher revolutionary action or revolutionary discourse that acted as an "energy" or as a force of "progress" in the words of Marxist historian Toyama Shigeki. The social force of peasant conflict is seen to have induced the Meiji Restoration, but the peasant movement remained "strapped" to the reins of power in the hands of the new samurai strata that came to power.

Herbert Bix, whose work on *Peasant Protest in Japan 1590-1884* (1986) introduced a sweeping panorama of the history of Tokugawa uprisings written from a dynamic and energetic perspective contrasts sharply with the single early study by Hugh Borton, *Peasant Uprisings in Japan* (1938), in which he saw uprisings as the "static" reflections of typical peasant revolts born of agrarian crisis within a feudal order. Bix projects a firmly Marxian view that infuses linearity into social history: the Tokugawa phenomenon plays out as the progressive struggles of the peasant against a corrupt feudal order.³⁰ He stresses the

role of exploitation and injustice that enflamed the Tokugawa peasants to protest.

In a different vein, James White, in his book *Ikki* (1995), covers the whole period of peasant conflict by developing a model of popular contention through statistical analysis of Aoki Koji's data supplemented by his own extensive additions of data. He emphasizes the importance of context in explaining conflict and contends that conflict successfully brought benefits protestors. White's innovative methodology represents a new dimension in the explanation of conflict and brought forth themes that are relatively unfamiliar in peasant uprisings research: self-interest, opportunity, success and reasonable if not "rational" behavior.

Whereas White explains peasant conflict in contemporary social science terms, in *Social Protest and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (1979), and *Peasant Uprisings in Japan: A Critical Anthology of Peasant Histories*, (1991), Anne Walthall exposes the mentalité of the late eighteenth century Temmei famine period upheavals. In her path-breaking studies of Tokugawa narratives and sources on peasant conflict, Walthall stresses the cultural and ideological components of the subject. Introducing the *Annales* perspective on social history, Walthall's works decipher the commoner's critical view of their Tokugawa betters. In peasant narratives, people such as Tanuma Okitsugu, the *bakufu* official who has been seen as an early modernizer in contemporary research, now surfaces as the exploiting evil culprit of the peasant. These approaches extend our perception of Tokugawa Japan beyond the twentieth-century modernist agenda, which disregards the critical perspective of the contemporaries of Tanuma.³¹

the Tokugawa Period. Tokyo: Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, 1938.

³¹ James White, *Ikki Social Conflict and Political Protest in Early Modern Japan*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, pp. 8-24 for the model; Ann Walthall, *Social Protest and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Japan*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986; Ann Walthall, Ed. and tr., *Peasant Uprisings in Japan: A Critical Anthology of Peasant Histories*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

²⁹ Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: the Underside of Modern Japan*, New York: Pantheon, 1982.

³⁰ Herbert P. Bix, *Peasant Protest in Japan 1590-1884*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986; Hugh Borton, *Peasant Uprisings in Japan of*

Stephen Vlastos presents a regional study of the Aizu and Shindatsu uprisings in central Japan in *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan* (1986) with special emphasis on the late Tokugawa *yonaoshi* ("world renewal") rebellions that carried the promise of a new revolutionary vision contemporary with the quagmire of the Meiji Restoration. Much debated as a representation of revolutionary aspirations by the peasants, the *yonaoshi* uprisings are seen to have been a by-product of the effects of international trade, which activated the political role of the small peasant producers of sericulture products for export. Positing the issue within the theoretical debate on peasant conflict between E. P. Thompson (moral economy demands of peasants in a subsistence economy) and Samuel Popkin (rising expectations of rational peasants in a market economy), Vlastos distinguishes the Shindatsu uprisings from the "moral Economy" perspective of E. P. Thompson and the development of that perspective by James C. Scott's analysis of Vietnamese peasant revolts: the Tokugawa peasants were part of the market forces of international trade and their circumstances could not be explained sufficiently with a moral economy paradigm – one which assumes a subsistence economy. However, he considers the late Tokugawa peasant to be extremely vulnerable within a market that entailed a "crisis of subsistence". Vlastos projects the late Tokugawa period as one of intense conflict within the villages, between the rich and poor, that superseded the conflicts between the ruler and the ruled.³²

While the field of peasant protest is dominated by macro-studies, the study of the peasants of Takaino and the 1871 Nakano uprisings, *Even the Gods Rebel: The Peasants of Takaino and the 1871 Nakano Uprising* (1998), is a micro-study of an uprising that deals with village dynamics in the Takaino area (which organized the Nakano uprising) prior to and during the event. Similar to the Vlastos Shindatsu rising, the Nakano uprising was a *yonaoshi* in the northeast Shinano *bakufu tenryō*. The study looks at everyday village documents that reveal an image of the village in

its ordinary communal praxis, circumstances quite different from that of a village under communal crisis and dissolution we customarily see in studies of uprisings based on government documents and village data that is immediate to the event. Compared to the general tenor of conflict literature, the Takaino study focuses more on the internal dynamics of the Takaino community, a solidarity reconstructed through conflict. It questions the assumptions we have about long-term community dissolution from the outward behaviour of rebels typically described in uprising accounts.³³

From the perspective of a growth-oriented view, the rising level of conflict in late Tokugawa society needed a new explanation and both White and Esenbel present a growth-oriented explanation for the conflict. White points out the insufficiency of the familiar explanation of conflict as the result of poverty and thankless exploitation. Conflict is not necessarily due to poverty and oppression *per se* but can also be due to competition among producers for more profit and to producer vulnerability coupled with the insistence of rural producers on further inroads into the market and tax system.³⁴ Esenbel deciphers the overall concealed production in the economy and estimates a gradual decline in the value of taxes in proportion to total production, coming up with an evaluation similar to White's.³⁵

Many of the conflict studies cover both the early modern and the modern periods in a continuous manner that carries a risk of finding too many links between the Tokugawa and the Meiji history of conflict. The case study of the peasants of Takaino is a good example of a study of socio-economic forces looking "backwards" into the Tokugawa period from an event that actually took place in 1871. William Kelly's study of the Shōnai region in the Northwest, *Deference and Defiance in Nineteenth Century Japan* (1986),

³² Stephen Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 156-167.

³³ Selcuk Esenbel, *Even the Gods Rebel: The Peasants of Takaino and the 1871 Nakano Uprising*. Ann Arbor: Association of Asian Studies Monographs 57, (1998): see pp. 17-20 for the concept of community resilience to social dissolution.

³⁴ White, *Ikki*, pp. 293-303 for overall argument.

³⁵ Esenbel, *Even the Gods*, contrast between Chart 1 on p.124 and Chart 2 on p. 128.

focuses on four cases of collective protest in the period 1840-1870, again crossing the Meiji Restoration into the late Tokugawa with a discrete vision toward the future. Finally, Roger Bowen's *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan: A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement* (1980) links popular protests in the Meiji period to the popular rights movement.³⁶

The debate has been varied, the arguments having their Western counterparts – primarily because of the eclectic use of the paradigms in similar Western studies – ranging from a retake of the classic Marxist paradigm to Tilly's focus on coercive states and communal conflict. Sometimes the English language scholarship on the Tokugawa disturbances risks facily applying the debates in European history to Japanese data, perhaps an unavoidable deficiency of comparative history. This issue aside, Scott's weapons of the weak, Ladurie's history of ordinary people, the mentalité focus of the *Annales* school, Thompson's perception of a moral economy and Popkin's rational peasant perspectives are among the important sources of inspiration.

The issue of conflict has, I believe, redirected the study of Tokugawa Japan, infusing it with the necessary tension to deconstruct the widely held rosy image of modern Japan. The ideology of modernism had largely removed the conflictual side of human nature, and the modernist description of the Japanese persona had portrayed the average Japanese as devoid of the ability to set

the terms for a social contract with power. Conflict literature has helped liberate the Tokugawa period from such perspectives by empowering the commoner, perhaps initially with a degree of over correction, and liberated the period from being the "obedient" servant who provides support and preparation for the modern future.

Limits of Modernity: Proto-Industry and Village Praxis

Interest in the subject of conflict and popular dissent has not disappeared; there is much room for further research especially at the micro/regional level and through anthropological/historical study of the role of religion in conflict.³⁷ However, contemporary research in early-modern studies has moved beyond the limits of debates on surplus and peasants *per se*, and has unveiled in depth the complexity of early-modern Japan. New studies of the social and economic terrain have increasingly blurred the line between the early modern and the modern by setting limits to the search for modernity in Tokugawa "sources."

Recent studies by Edward Pratt, Kären Wigen, and Herman Ooms present rich, detailed portraits that enable us to understand the inner workings of some of the elements in early modern society previously revealed only in general terms in the English literature. In *Japan's Proto-industrial Elite; The Economic Foundation of the Gōnō*, Pratt analyzes the wealthy peasants, wealthy peasant cultivator/landlords who also engaged in multiple money-generating commercial pursuits. They were also the rural political and social elite. Much admired as the rural entrepreneurs of early modern Japan, the *gōnō* constituted a unique class which combined the roles of landlord, industrialist, financier, and merchant in one class, a role that differed from the experience of Europe during the industrial age when the commercial

³⁶ Roger W. Bowen, *Rebellion and Democracy in Meiji Japan: A Study of Commoners in the Popular Rights Movement*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980; William W. Kelly, *Deference and Defiance in Nineteenth Century Japan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986. Studies by Richard Smethurst on tenancy disputes that took place after the Meiji Restoration into the twentieth century in, *Agricultural Development and Tenancy Disputes in Japan, 1870-1940* (1986); by Michael Lewis on the famous rice riots of 1918, *Rioters and Citizens: Mass Protest in Imperial Japan* (1990); Nimura Kazuo on *The Ashio Riot of 1907 A Social History of Mining in Japan* (1998) focus on conflict as a means of understanding pre-war Modern Japan, but tangentially also provide insights into the previous Tokugawa period as well.

³⁷ I have noticed that there are some very interesting dissertations (e.g. Elson Eugen Boles, *Rebels, Gamblers and Silk 1860-1890*, Ph.D. 1998 SUNY), and recently the publication of an English translation of Nimura's *Ashio Riot of 1907* reflect the continuous "pull" of the subject.

and industrial classes tended to be different strata and mostly urban. But in other respects the political economy of the *gōnō* is seen to have been similar to the earlier proto-industrial developments in Europe. Pratt looks at *gōnō* activities across time in the critical industries of tea, sake, and textiles in central and eastern Japan. Rather than firmly situating them as the direct ancestors of the modern entrepreneurs of Japan, in the manner of Shibusawa Eiichi as Smith and others argued, Pratt sees them as the products of a proto-industrial transitional economy.³⁸

The book complements a line of studies on proto-industry starting with Hauser's on the Osaka Kinai region cotton trade (1974), David Howell's study of Hokkaido fishing and fertilizer industries (1995), and Kären Wigen's exploration of the proto-industrial economy in the Shimoina Valley of Shinano (1995).³⁹ The perspective shared by Pratt and Wigen is that there were limits to the modernity of the Tokugawa legacy, thus moving them away from earlier scholarship that placed so much emphasis on the causal links of Japan's Tokugawa tradition to modernization. Pratt argues that the rural entrepreneurs of Japan had a limited life in the history of industrialization. Proto-industry came to a close with the maturation of modern industry in the first decades of the twentieth century. Even if they were not completely swept away by Japan's industrial revolution, by the nineteen twenties the wealthy landlords gave up direct cultivation and were replaced in their traditional role as diffusers of know-how in agriculture by state-run institutions. Many became absentee landlords or continued their economic role as bankers.

³⁸ Edward Pratt, *Japan's Proto-industrial Elite; The Economic Foundation of the Gōnō*, Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1999.

³⁹ William B. Hauser, *Economic Institutional Change in Tokugawa Japan: Osaka and the Kinai Cotton Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974; David L. Howell, *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995; Kären Wigen, *The Making of a Japanese Periphery 1750-1920*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Pratt's evaluation of the rural elites differs depending on regional characteristics. In some, they acted as leaders in generating wealth that also benefited the poor of the community. In other areas the *gōnō* projects for new industries created impoverishment because peasants were subject to the volatile character of the economy. An accomplished study of an elite across a wide regional spectrum, Pratt's study raises the question of what consequences followed from the gradual disappearance of the rural elite starting during the nineteenth century and its almost total dissolution with World War I and the Great Depression. As an intermediate elite, the *gōnō* had provided an element of stability to the community. One can surmise from Pratt's analysis that without the presence of the *gōnō* to provide a source of local income and play some kind of a diffusionist role, the impoverished peasants fell victim to an agrarian crisis which goaded the young army officers of peasant stock to consider themselves, ironically, the patrimonial saviours of the village bent on uplifting the peasantry with a militarist strategy of violence.⁴⁰

The interesting work of Brian W. Platt on the three generations of the Ozawa family, a member of the village elite, is especially successful in constructing a sense of the individual in the midst of historic changes that are usually analyzed only in abstract structuralist terminology. Platt's article "inverts" the approach of most modern scholarship which focuses on different aspects of the class and status roles of people in Tokugawa history, and explores the multiple roles performed by a single family – a significant step illuminating the complex interlacing between class, family, status, culture in traditional societies that is frequently artificially severed in order to fit the historical data into assumed categories of social analysis.⁴¹

Kären Wigen's study of Shimoina valley again takes us across the boundaries of the early mod-

⁴⁰ This surmise can be linked to the work of Ann Waswo, *Japanese Landlords: The Decline of a Rural Elite*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977.

⁴¹ Brian W. Platt, "Elegance, Prosperity, Crisis: Three Generations of Tokugawa Village Elites," *Monumenta Nipponica* 55:1 (2000): 45-81.

ern and the modern as she applies a geographic perspective to the historical development of the silk industry after the opening of Japan to international trade. Looking at a sericulture environment similar to that of Vlastos's study of the Shindatsu, she links the local and the global, economy and polity, geography and history in a complex web that again shows that it is not possible to separate the social and economic entities from the political and the international, especially in Japan. She negotiates a passage between the production of an integral economic complex in the Ina Valley from 1750 to 1860 and the process by which Japan emerged as an industrial power in East Asia in the last half of the nineteenth century. In the transformation, Shimoina silk production was subordinated to a single national center controlled by the metropol, Tokyo.

Herman Ooms's challenging study of Tokugawa village affairs, *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Status, Power, Law* (1996), engages us in a new look at the inter- and intra-village documents of litigation from a revised Weberian perspective, one we might call the political economy of law. Ooms is inspired by the writings of Pierre Bourdieu on early modern France and he constructs an engaging picture of the praxis of Tokugawa law at the village and community levels. Reworking the categories of class, status, and power through a model of convertible capital (economic, social and symbolic), he deciphers the inner workings of the village and its relation to power. Using tax documents, *shumon aratame chō*, petitions, and court documents, Ooms reveals a macro image of the juridical field and the specific power generated by laws. In this respect, we learn of the actual procedure of the distribution of the tax burden within the village collectivity that lay at the base of village autonomy under samurai rule and other procedures of actual litigation. The "mountains of resentment" chapter concerning the woman Ken, who persistently litigated against her community in order that it redress their complicity in the murder of her brother, gives hitherto uncharted detail about the processes of litigious contestation and the conditions of peasant women. His treatment of the outcaste community under the aegis of the state and compared to racism is significant because it is one of the few studies in English of the social structure

of outcaste discrimination in Tokugawa Japan. Outcast discrimination is also probably the only single research subject of the early modern period that is still politically and socially sensitive in present day Japanese society, so that the researcher faces special difficulties in gaining access to unpublished sources in many regions.⁴²

Ooms' work creates an image of political authority firmly intact, much more so than the peasant-conflict literature, and political power could successfully control the people through the fine-tuning of the symbolic value of status, thereby co-opting class-consciousness to put it in bluntly Marxist terms. From our perspective of preferred notions of universal law, the praxis of the Tokugawa customary arrangement of law seems to have been particularly situational and unilateral in the hands of the "secular" political forces. While Tokugawa "secularism" has been much admired in the secularist vision of modernism back in the nineteen sixties (in such works as Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion*), at the same time, as Ooms notes, when looked at close up, Tokugawa law resembles martial law, which is interested in order more than justice.

An interesting outcome of recent publications on Tokugawa socio-economic history is that we have now a concentration of English studies on the Shinano-Nagano region: my study of the Kami-Takai *gun* in the northeast, Kären Wigen's study on Shimoina in the south, Herman Ooms on Kita-Saku district below Takai-*gun*, Ronald Toby's study of rural financial networks, and now the recent research of Brian Platt on a Shinshū family.⁴³ Surely, this must be coincidental one first surmises, but perhaps not. I think that the role of the remarkably advanced level of local history in Japan and particularly the leadership of

⁴² Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Status, Power, Law*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

⁴³ Ronald P. Toby, "Both a Borrower and a Lender Be: From Village Moneylender to Rural Banker in the Tempō Era," *Monumental Nipponica*. 46: 4 (1991): 483-513. In addition, a number of the works by Laurel Cornell, Anne Jannetta (cited below), Hayami Akira, Saitō Osamu and others cited in Kurosu Satomi's review of demographic history also focus on this same region.

the accomplished historians of the local school system and prefectural historical institutes of Nagano have played a decisive role in why so many English-language authors chose to look at Japan through a Shinano lens. Similar to the commendable French tradition of combining the role of the research-historian with that of the high school teacher, the modern Japanese network of local historian-teachers is still alive in Nagano and must be credited with having developed the field of socio-economic history at the local level to such a high degree that it has had ramifications in the work of non-Japanese scholars as well.

Beyond the Rice Fields: History of Urban Life, Fishing, and Forestry

In contrast to the village and rural world in general, the world of the town and the city has remained until recently a relatively unstudied subject as a social and economic history. James McClain's *Kanazawa: A Seventeenth Century Castle Town* (1982) and Gary Leupp on *Servants Shop Hands, and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan* (1992) are pioneer works in this field.⁴⁴ Heretofore, the Tokugawa city is overwhelmingly the entertaining world of eighteenth century Genroku Japan, but not a socio-economic structure or praxis in the manner of the Tokugawa village. The only major exceptions that come to mind are the earlier works such as William Hauser on Osaka cited above, and the unique research of Gilbert Rozman on Edo and Japanese urban networks; for a long time it was the village rather than the city that represented the social and economic character of Tokugawa Japan.⁴⁵ Smith's view of early modern Japanese economic growth as primarily of commercialized rural origins had contrasted the "rural conservatism" of

the "Japanese" model with the "progressiveness" of the "Euro-Western" model of economic growth which was seen as having had primarily urban origins. Norman had been sharply critical of the feudal origins of Japan's pre-war authoritarian polity that derived its conservatism from the rural character of Japan's bourgeois development. Both views saw a sharp contrast between the Japanese and the European experiences that resulted in divergent political paths (however, Smith's analysis searched for a balanced analysis that did not see Japanese rurality as a negative political factor). Both views saw European economic growth as rooted in commercialized towns and cities that gave birth to civil society and liberal thought. In contrast, Japan's economic growth took place in the rural communities that were bastions of peasant conservatism. While much less so for Smith, the implication of this assumption has been that Tokugawa Japan lacked parallel social and political currents that encouraged the development of civil society.

The recent volume of James McClain and Wakita Osamu, *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan* (1999), is path breaking in putting the city on the map of Tokugawa Japan, therefore, challenging the sharp delineation of differences between the Japanese and the European early modern experience. This collection of interesting articles by Japanese and Western scholars describes the layers of social and economic scenery, an autonomous administration in the hands of a merchant elite cooperating with samurai authority, urban communities and gangs, a pulsating commercial life, all as part of urban Tokugawa Japan with the implications that there was quite a lively autonomy of the "city" as an early modern environment. The work gives us the energy of urban Osaka including its history, local *inari* worship, *jōruri* entertainment, the life of mendicant monks, protests and so on.⁴⁶

Cities may be centers of liberty and autonomy for the individual who is distanced from social constraints of the village, but they also have an underside that is more dangerous than the image of village communities of prudent hard working

⁴⁴ James McClain, *Kanazawa: A Seventeenth Century Japanese Castle Town*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982; Garry P. Leupp, *Servants Shop Hands, and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

⁴⁵ Gilbert Rozman, *Urban Networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974; Gilbert Rozman, "Edo's Importance in a Changing Tokugawa Society," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1:1 (1974): 113-126.

⁴⁶ James McClain and Wakita Osamu, eds., *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

peasants. The new work of Phillippe Pons exposes the structures of poverty and crime in urbanity of Tokugawa Japan and today's Tokyo. In his book on misery and crime in Japan, Pons has a sweeping vision of the past and present in urban Japan wherein also dwell the underworld of poverty and crime in liminal spaces of criminal subcultures of the yakuza-the familiar "mafia" underworld of Japan.⁴⁷ Similarly, Nam-lin Hur describes the social scene of prayer and play in the Asakusa Sensoji temple district of Edo that survived as a small niche of Tokugawa urban popular religion.⁴⁸ The Tokugawa city is finally being put on the map of an early modernity that, while not identical with the European scene, appears in step with the standard view of early modernity for Europe.

Pioneer works in their field such as those of David Howell and Arne Kalland on the study of the sea, shift our obsession with the landlocked image of village Japan to its coastal environment. These studies offer an alternative image of Japan as a sea-fearing and fishing nation since the middle ages.⁴⁹ Despite the importance of the sea in the Japanese diet and traditional economic activity, little research has been done on the history of Japan's fishing industry. Arne Kalland's work is a landmark approach that has opened a new path to understanding early modern Japan. Kalland's study analyzes how fishing villages were integrated into larger regions and thereby simultaneously breaks the scholarly isolation of Tokugawa villages from the outside world. In his words, the study of fishing villages constructs the bridge between the city and the farming villages and unveils the regional economy of Tokugawa society. Combining anthropology, economic history and the methods of resource management, the study also re-examines late Tokugawa reforms to solve the famine and economic crises as part of

an argument that brings back the role of government regulation of the village as a significant component in the modernization of Japan after the Meiji Restoration.

In this context, the study of man's exploitation and contestation of nature has gained new light. William W. Kelly's earlier work, *Water Controls in Tokugawa Japan*, Constantine Nomikos Vaporis's recent work on overland communication, Ann B. Janetta's study of epidemics and finally, Conrad Totman's *The Green Archipelago: Forestry in Pre-industrial Japan* all expose the issue of man's manipulation of the environment that entailed the destruction of nature with all of its negative consequences for Japan.⁵⁰

The Unregistered Lives of Men and Women: Studies of Sexuality and Gender

A number of innovative, richly textured discussions of sexuality and gender identity have opened new windows to understanding the public and private lives of men and women. These recent publications show us that the field has attained an exciting complexity in terms of methodology and conceptualization, in tune with widespread contemporary trends in historiography.

In comparison to the subjects of political economy such as proto-industry and village elites, recent discussions of the history of gender roles and the regulation of sexuality present an image of Tokugawa Japan that is the most "severed" from the post-Meiji history of modern Japan. One comes away with the impression that although social and economic processes and practices continued into the post-1868 era for some time, the modern state was more effective in modifying, eradicating, or mutating the Tokugawa legacy of gender and sexuality and replac-

⁴⁷ Phillippe Pons. *Misere et crime au Japon du XVIIe siecle a nos jours*. Paris: Gallimard, 1999.

⁴⁸ Nam-lin Hur. *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensoji and Edo Society*. Cambridge Massachusetts.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000.

⁴⁹ David Howell, *Capitalism From Within*; Arne Kalland, *Fishing Villages in Tokugawa Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995.

⁵⁰ Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers*; William W. Kelly, *Water Control in Tokugawa Japan: Irrigation Organization in a Japanese River Basin, 1600-1870*, Ithaca: Cornell China-Japan Program, 1982; Ann Bowman Jannetta, *Epidemics and Mortality in Early Modern Japan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997; Totman, *The Green Archipelago*.

ing it with the “modern” Japanese images of man and woman/male and female, and that this was not necessarily a positive development. In the study of gender and sexuality, the Meiji/modern Japanese state does not seem to have played a liberating role. The modern state appears to have sacrificed an early modern sexual culture of flexibility for the sake of the civilizing process.

The volumes edited by Gail Bernstein and Tonomura, Walthall, and Wakita have established the study of gender and the history of women as a significant new field in early modern studies.⁵¹ The study of women as labor in the family-based proto-industries of sericulture, textile, and in rare instances even in the male domain of sake breweries underscores the importance of female labor in upholding the household and providing crucial labor for by-employments. Read together with the Pratt and Wigen studies of late Tokugawa and post-Meiji proto-industry processes, these essays of rural and urban working women illuminate the way gender roles and reproductive roles were integral to the successful functioning of broad socio-economic processes. The overall tone of the rich array of studies on Tokugawa women, especially the farmwomen of the countryside, stresses the relatively flexible division of gender roles between in the family, one where parents shared the chores of cultivation and child rearing. Recent studies describe a relatively greater freedom for females in the villages compared to the stricter social controls and confinement of upper-class samurai women and compared to Meiji women who were “reconstructed” under modern reforms. Interestingly, westerner visitors to Japan appear to have noticed the relative freedom and ease of the village women of Japan in previous times as well. Leupp cites Jesuit missionaries of the sixteenth century who remarked on women’s ability “to go hither and thither as they list.”⁵²

On the other hand, Yokota Fuyuhiko’s article on rethinking the *Greater Learning for Women* (*Onna daigaku* of Kaibara Ekken) sees it as the precursor of the Meiji ideology that defined women’s work largely in terms of maintaining the household and reproducing heirs at home. Yokota argues that the *Onna Daigaku* was the first step toward the establishment of the post-Meiji ideology of the good wife, wise mother and modern professional housewife.⁵³ Similarly, the Tokugawa legacy of the authorized prostitution is also seen to have survived into the modern period in various forms, leading to the “comfort women” of the Pacific War.

Both volumes attest long years of study on the history of women in Japan. These scholars bring forth new approaches to the history of women and promise an interdisciplinary breakthrough. The research is revisionist in that it aims to break through the prevalent Marxian tradition in Japan that emphasizes the areas of production dominated by men.

Ann Walthall’s biography of Matsuo Taseko, a peasant woman from the Ina valley who was involved in loyalist anti-Tokugawa activities, brings to life the revolutionary environment in the last decades of the *bakufu* regime. Taseko emerges as a vibrant example of many women who step into an unusual role in a revolutionary environment. Walthall’s excellent study is a significant achievement in the writing of historical biography in Japanese history: It treats Japanese historical actors as complex individuals who represent the “not so famous and illustrious” and allows the reader to penetrate into the social history of the general population.⁵⁴

The study of Japanese women has been launched with the close reading of the Japanese context through the theoretical and historical evaluation of women and gender pioneered in the scholarship on women in the West. The approach

⁵¹ Gail Lee Bernstein, *Recreating Japanese Women 1600-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, p. 2; Tonomura Hitomi, Ann Walthall, and Wakita Haruko, *Women and Class in Japanese History*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999.

⁵² Garry P. Leupp, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*

1603-1868, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 186.

⁵³ “Imagining Working Women in Early Modern Japan,” Tonomura et. al., eds. *Women and Class*, p. 166.

⁵⁴ Ann Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

brings a significant comparative advantage to analysis of the subject, but there is much room for biography, such as Walthall's. On the other hand, that the belated publication of Ella Wiswell's work on Suyemura (1982) remains the best account of women in pre-war rural Japan suggests the need for greater efforts to penetrate the communal and family activities of everyday Japanese women in the Tokugawa period.⁵⁵

Other scholars have focused on construction of the sexual in the male and female worlds. Beginning with Gary Leupp's *Male Colors* and Sumie Jones's edited volume (both 1995) that brought together studies by numerous scholars on sexuality and Edo culture have exposed the connection of the institutions of the public realm with the intimate world of sexuality in its various forms.⁵⁶ The recent study of Gregory Pflugfelder on the subject of male-male sexuality (a term that both Leupp and Pflugfelder explain is historically more accurate than the European term, homosexuality) covering the period from the early Tokugawa to the contemporary age, maps in discourse analysis the praxis of sexuality in men, and as a by-product, that in women.⁵⁷

In his study of *nanshoku*, or, "male-colors," Leupp shows how male/male sexuality was intricately linked to the all-male monastic culture that arrived from China in the ninth century: the acolyte boys took the place of women because Buddhism did not condone heterosexual desire. The Japanese perception of homosexuality was quite

similar to that of the Eastern Mediterranean perception of male sexuality as naturally bi-sexual.

In contrast to the segregation of categories of sexual and gender identities in modern societies, the Tokugawa praxis of sexuality in both the male and female worlds carried a greater degree of ambivalence about sexuality in general. Beneath the regime's disapproval of sexual conduct as unbecoming by Confucian norms, Tokugawa society widely tolerated behaviour that allowed crossing into other sexual identities. The public's admiration of androgyny and the floating world of the courtesans attest to the combination of the sexual with the aesthetic and the artistic in early modern urban culture. The only subject in the field of sexual and gender identity studies that remains to be studied is the social and psychological history of romantic love between men and women, which is still frequently handled only within the framework of the *shinju monogatari*, or love suicide tales of Tokugawa literature. As Leupp notes, Tokugawa Japan had a profound distrust of intense romantic love relationships between men and women. Their legacy seems to have also influenced the historical study of the subject as well since there is still relatively less knowledge on the operation of the culture of heterosexuality in Japanese culture.

Plugfelder provides a complex analysis of the discourse on male/male sexuality down to the post-WW II era where the legacy of Tokugawa sexual culture (primarily among men) is relegated to the shadowy marginal quarters of society. Setting his debate within the *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* distinction of Michel Foucault, and between the sexual culture of the classical world and the orient versus that of the post-classical West, Plugfelder presents a "western" reading of the shifts in sexual culture in Japan. The emphasis is on the active encounter of the Japanese public with new notions/strictures about sexuality both within popular culture and within professional circles that have accepted the western legal and medical knowledge. Plugfelder avoids the usual Orient/Occident or East/West pitfalls of interpretation. The delicate way in which Plugfelder weaves French legal concepts and German medical discourse into the Japanese environment by showing their complex interaction with Japanese critical discourse is an excellent example of

⁵⁵ Robert J. Smith and Ella Lury Wiswell, *The Women of Suyemura*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

⁵⁶ Sumie Jones, ed., *Sexuality and Edo Culture 1750-1850*, Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995; Gary P. Leupp, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan 1603-1868*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

⁵⁷ Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse 1600-1950*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; Selcuk Esenbel, "The Anguish of Civilized Behavior: The Use of Western Cultural Forms in the Everyday Lives of the Meiji Japanese and the Ottoman Turks During the Nineteenth Century," *Japan Review* 5, (1994): 145-185.

a realistic assessment of how Japan and the West, in this case Europe, fuse into a joint historical fate.

Such studies show us that the psychological history of westernization is yet to be written. Plugfelder's account of sexuality represents a good example of what I call the "anguish of civilized behavior." Here, the civilizing process of constructing a modern persona out of an interaction of oriental and occidental social and cultural environments creates the "double" tension of bi-culturally determined spheres of the rational and the emotive for the psychology of the individual.

Summary and General Observations

Interpretive Trends. A review of the literature on the Tokugawa people for the last two decades leaves one with the impression that there is a new image of Tokugawa society: these men and women were different from the modern people of Japan who are more like us, products of a homogenizing, assimilating modern state. Recent studies not only expose Tokugawa people as actors in a social and economic terrain, but reflect how their activities were irrevocably connected to the exigency of power and could in some measure manipulate it as well.

One can summarize the new image of the Tokugawa "early modern" in social and economic history as the following. Rather than the formal contours of the character of Tokugawa society, our new emphasis is on the dynamic interaction between the *de jure* and the *de facto* of historical behaviour; we are more attentive to deciphering the "due process" of the social-economic praxis. We now have multiple photographs that illustrate various sections of human behavior ranging from the construction of gender and sexual identities to the way the peasantry activated the institutions of samurai hegemony to make inroads in the system. Today, the Tokugawa body politic can be interpreted as an arena of negotiation and litigation. We notice the situationality and flexibility that accompanied the oppressive coercive power of a Tokugawa military which in some measure successfully co-opted local interests. To put it in Japanese terms, we now see more of the *honne*, the real intention of Tokugawa society in socio-

economic terms beneath the *tatemae*, the outward principle of feudal power. The Tokugawa village for example is no longer the oppressed community of feudal peasants that had been prevalent in the early stages of Japanese studies, nor is it like Tolstoy's idyllic rural utopia that was the precursor of modernity. The early modern village is instead the environment where conflict and consensus among peasants of varied classes, wealth, and status developed through their own procedures. In sum, the Tokugawa historical arena is now a stage where there is a significant degree of fine-tuning, the term that best describes our new approach to the early modern today. The early modern state was concerned about retaining their overall authority, but they were not that interested in penetrating into the details of community management or the personal lives of individuals in the way that the modern state can be; Tokugawa society is a world where urban authoritarian power could or had to be negotiated at the grassroots level.

Therefore, the Tokugawa age sometimes appears as a collection of admirable qualities that were lost along the way to Japan Inc. Government was autocratic but flexible; law was not democratic but answered to the needs of the day with a complex situationality; culture was regional but appears "authentic" in the sense that it was not dictated from the metropolitan center; there was exploitation of the producers, but peasants negotiated their taxes and, if pushed, put up a good fight against the wealthy landlords and merchants as well as the governmental authorities in seeking justice; there was poverty but proto-industry as well. It meant that some were rich among the many poor, but proto-industry was the basis for the circulation of capital and the foundation of a rurally based production. In sum, the Tokugawa age rested on a *modus vivendi* between central power and local interest.

At the personal level, the decentralized quality of Tokugawa life also suggests the "advantage" of a presumed absence of regulation over sexual desire and a balanced gender self-image at the commoner level compared to the highly regulated breeding required of the military aristocracy. Leupp notes, "Although the regime attempted to freeze class distinctions and regulate the minutiae of its subjects' lives, it made little effort to police

individuals' sex lives."⁵⁸

In the newer literature the Tokugawa experience, in both its positive and negative aspects, emerges as quite distinct from the super-structure of the post 1868 modern sectors and this "early modern" legacy disappears by the Great Depression. Unlike the standard modernist view of the post-war period that interpreted the Tokugawa era as preparation for the future, new scholarship in some ways is again ambivalent about seeing the Tokugawa legacy as directly antecedent to the modern, especially in terms of its psychological history and economic history. The "Tokugawa Early-modern and the post-Meiji early-Modern," to use Wigen's words, combine within the prevalent form of a rural proto-industrial-commercial network in the Shimoina region of central Japan in a Tokugawa-style geo-topographic-social setting that, however, is temporary, vanishing during the Taishō period.⁵⁹ The imposition of modern values through education, nationalist ideology, and so on molds the men and women with "loose" habits into modern images of male and female behavior.

The new writing has made us more conscious of the breaks and discontinuities of the early modern era before later times brought about total centralization, total industry, total war, and total empire. Our sympathy for the early modern age seems to play a role in this new image of the Tokugawa age. The recent studies, especially of the period from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, depict a lively proto-industry in the villages and flourishing bourgeois culture in the cities. In some respects this "liveliness" compares well with similar developments in France before the French Revolution. The customs of the early modern era in Japan still seem admirable in some respects, especially in how the individual man and woman fared under the early modern regime, before the "guillotine" of modernism struck Japan just as it did Europe.

The strong points of the field are obvious. The study of early modern Japan has become sensitized to the use of comparative approaches through both theoretical constructs of social sci-

ence and an interaction with contemporary research on the history of Europe. Hence, recent publications show sophistication in making comparisons with the Western experiences, by using contemporary research on various regions of Europe rather than a monolithic, idealized "West" as in the past. Research on the early modern history of France and England appears to be the primary choice of comparison. I would add, however, that research on Germany, which is less used, can provide useful insight into the history of Tokugawa Japan. On the other hand, the primary comparative concern of the scholarship is still with the historical environment of the First World; while understandable, that focus creates the danger of a special form of *datsu-a*, where the Asian environment to which Japan undeniably belongs receives less attention.

Methods and Materials. This survey of recent publications on socio-economic history of Japan shows the rich variety of topics and methodology in the field. The cross-fertilization of history with social science theory stands out, with "theory" ranging from the classic Marxist paradigm to post-structuralist approaches. The studies of growth, conflict, proto-industry, village law and society are reflective of structuralist approaches but there is great variety among them. Whereas Hanley and Yamamura used historical demography and economic history to describe Tokugawa economic growth, Wigen applies the geographer's methodology to portray the development of proto-industry on a regional scale. White's analysis stands out for his application of quantitative methods to a whole series of data on the Tokugawa period.

In village studies, the use of theory contributed to a new sensitivity to the meaning of village documents such as the *taka shirabe chō*, *shumon aratame chō*, *kenchi chō* and the language of petitions. Scholars now understand them as texts beyond their formal content. We are now much more aware of the need to recognize that documents such as the *takashirabe chō*, tax documents, *kaisai chō*, tax collection documents, *shumon aratame chō*, and the temple population registers, while they say something about the numerical framework of Tokugawa communal life are frequently more important as expressions of the social and political distribution of power than of

⁵⁸ Garry P. Leupp, *Male Colors*, p. 61.

⁵⁹ *The Making of a Japanese Periphery*, p. 293.

economic reality as such.⁶⁰ For Ooms, the rich variety of village documents are the means to a structuralist and functionalist interpretation of Tokugawa village praxis of class, status, power, and law. The new historical research on gender and sexuality also creatively employs a range of materials, from the familiar documentation created by the Tokugawa authorities to private diaries, woodblock prints, literature, and medical treatises.

English-language scholarship in Tokugawa economic and social history is largely oblivious of the excellent research in European languages other than English. Recent European publications now get more regular reviews in English publications, especially in *Monumenta Nipponica* with the contributions of Peter Kornicki and Herman Ooms, but the field of English language studies on Japan has had difficulty incorporating new research from these languages. Research on Tokugawa social and economic history in German by Klaus Muller, the expert on pre-Tokugawa and Tokugawa economic history, studies by Regine Mathias Pauer, Erich Pauer and Reinhard Zöllner remain known primarily to the German-speaking academy except when these authors choose to write something in English.⁶¹ The study in French by Philippe Pons offers a fascinating entry into the underworld of poverty

and crime in the liminal spaces of Tokugawa (and modern) criminal subculture but it is not widely known beyond France. The Internet and web pages of the Japanese studies research centres composed in many European languages, promises better access to the international world of Tokugawa Japanese studies.

Recent research has the advantage of being able to rely upon the strong tradition of historical research in Japan. Sometimes unduly criticized in the past for being Marxist, there is now a healthy and balanced dialogue within the Japanese research on the village, conflict, gender and other topics. This situation facilitates interaction with our Japanese colleagues.

However, it is also incumbent upon the student in the field of socio-economic history to develop the necessary skills and "patience" to experience direct engagement with the rich sources of Tokugawa manuscripts in the archives and research centres in Japan. Some of the work reviewed here (e.g., Kalland, Walthall) would either have been impossible without engagement with handwritten documents or it would have been far less successful scholarship. We can expect that the need to use manuscript materials will increase as socio-economic historians address issues (e.g., gender) for which our Japanese colleagues have not created compendia of transcribed sources.

Issues for Future Research. Those of us who focus on the Tokugawa social-economic field have pretty much kept our gaze on the realm of the commoners: this made sense in the initial stages of transforming a field that needed to "liberate" the Tokugawa people from the hegemony of modernity. But such an emphasis leaves much room for additional research. The following appear to be some of the fundamental problems that remain to be addressed.

While we have gained a better understanding of the inner reality of the village, the study of the socio-economic world of the samurai and the urban environment remains foggy despite a handful of excellent works. For example, we know little about the inner praxis of a daimyo residence in Edo. Also at the high end of the social scale, we could use further work to supplement the recent publication of Lee Butler's study of the *kuge*, the civilian nobility of Kyoto, whose eighteenth and nineteenth century history in particular remains

⁶⁰ For me, the village land and population registers, although they provided numerical information, also represented the state of social status and power within the Takaino village that provided a better understanding of the political leadership of the 1871 Nakano uprising.

⁶¹ See, for example, Klaus Muller, *Wirtschafts- und Technikgeschichte Japans. (The history of economy and technology in Japan)*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988; Klaus Muller, *Agrarproduktion und Agrarschrifttum im Japan des 17. Jahrhunderts (Agrarian production and Agrarian writings in seventeenth century Japan)*. Bochum: Hab.-Schr., 1976; Ulrich Pauly, "Ikkō-ikki. Die Ikkō Aufstände u. ihre Entwicklung aus d. Aufständen d. bündischen Bauern u. Provinzialen d. Japan. Mittelalters." ("Ikkō ikki. The Ikkō uprising and its development among the association of peasants and provincials of Japan during the middle ages.") Ph.D. dissertation. Bonn: 1985.

largely unstudied.⁶² Prior to Butler's study, our general impression of Tokugawa history suggested that the *kuge* lived a restricted life in Kyoto. Nothing prepares us for their sudden Bakumatsu arrival on the political scene as loyalists with a distinct dislike of the *bakufu*.

A similar problem exists at the other end of the social scale, the bottom of Tokugawa society. The outcastes (*eta*, *hinin*, etc.) rarely figure in historical studies outside of Japan. While Ooms (*Tokugawa Village Practice*) has recently delved into aspects of this subject, we still have no clear idea of their communal life under the discriminatory customs of the Tokugawa regime.

There is also no study of the history of childhood to parallel the very significant contribution of French historiography to our understanding of the shift between the pre-modern and the modern. Changing conceptions of infancy, childhood, and adulthood might offer insights and a path to resolve the debate on *mabiki* and other social issues as well.

Another uncharted subject is the connection between the perception of the foreigner and the custom of using women as agents of diplomacy by the Tokugawa authorities, an interesting aspect of contemporary gender issues. I am thinking here of the late Tokugawa – early Meiji phenomena, the “Okichi” syndrome: the Tokugawa authorities assigned women to take care of the private and public needs of new male foreign residents as a kind of diplomatic ploy to placate the “barbarian.” (Okichi was assigned to serve Townsend Harris in Shimoda; her service and later suicide became the object of nationalist ideology.)⁶³

⁶² Lee Butler, *Emperor and Aristocracy in Japan, 1467-1680: Resilience and Renewal*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2002.

⁶³ Although the Rokumeikan experiment of the late Meiji years has nothing to do with the poor servant girl Okichi's service, or that of other women of the lower classes who were assigned to take care of Westerners without families, there are some thought-provoking similarities. According to the *Attic Letters* of Tsuda Ume and Takie Lebra's study of Meiji aristocratic women, *Above the Clouds*, Japanese aristocratic ladies were instructed never to

On the economic side of the picture, the social and economic history of money and the role of the Tokugawa *bakufu* as a fiscal power offers the promise of learning how recoinage and currency manipulation interacted with social and political concerns (this is a new subject in European history which may offer methodological hints for Japanese historians).

Concluding Remarks. The socio-economic studies in early modern Japanese history reflect the flourishing of early-modern socio-economic history in the historiography of Europe and other regions. After a prolonged obsession with the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries – the rise of the modern state and the industrial revolution – savants like the *Annales* historians Braudel and Ladurie helped us discover the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Academia has also benefited from the liberal atmosphere in recent years that is more tolerant of personal agendas of identity and choice. Subjects such as homosexuality, and sexuality *per se* would have been difficult to write and publish about a generation ago. In recent years many of the new studies on sexuality, proto-industry, law and society – again the history of Europe – appear to have been a significant inspiration for the comparative framework of the historians of early modern Japan.

refuse the dance proposal of a foreign guest during the Rokumeikan galas, part of the diplomacy of treaty revision in the late nineteenth century – a sacrifice they were encouraged to make as a patriotic duty. This strategy, too, represents the use of the female to “pacify” the foreigner. Yoshiko Furuki, ed., *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda's Correspondence to Her American Mother*, New York: Weatherhill, 1991; Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p.189, for discussion of women and diplomacy. Finally, in my visit to Shimoda a number of years ago, I was surprised to discover a scroll in the museum that depicts Okichi as a Chinese princess sent to the barbarian nomad rulers of the steppes to placate the threatening foe, a story that adds another fascinating twist to the use of women in the world of diplomacy.

Ultimately, Tokugawa social and economic history now impels us to come to terms with the early modern character of governance over a population that was unquestionably subject to the supreme authority of its various rulers; however, within this framework the implementation of political power at the grass roots level was based on seasonal and cyclical negotiation with local power, the village elite-landlords and/or the broader community. Recent early modern Tokugawa social and economic history focuses on detecting the processes by which written and customary law were implemented by the *bakufu* and the local domain governments, polities whose absolute authority remained unquestioned. The contrast between the flexible nature of negotiation within the Tokugawa social scene and that of the draconian hand of the modern state in the form of the Meiji regime, however, should not lead to the idealization of one era over the other. The difference between the early modern and the modern in state - society relations actually illustrates a shift in the niches of tension, moving from the local level to the national. One can also suggest that the fight between the ruling strata and the ruled turned from a contest over how to implement power under a classic set of documents to a contest over the construction of new documents that defined new roles for state and society.

Tokugawa people as we seen them in the documents and as we narrate them in our imagination are "dead"; however, recent studies imply that the Tokugawa era was an entity unto itself that was doomed to "die" once the political will expressed through the Meiji Restoration began to construct a modern Japanese state and society. Many of the recent studies on Tokugawa social and economic history acknowledge this loss. The capital that is presumed to have been born of the Tokugawa proto-industrialization may have remained, and the know-how of community organization may have survived into the post Meiji era, but the human persona of the Tokugawa age (i.e., the *gōnō*) is lost forever.

Recent research has demonstrated the significance of a dynamic approach in constructing the Tokugawa individual amidst the restraints of the geo-political situation in which they functioned. Ann Walthall's excellent biography of Matsuo Taseko goes beyond the definition of gender his-

tory or women's history *per se*. As John Breen noted in a review, it is an outstanding biography of this politically engaged woman who was a disciple of the late Tokugawa nativist, Hirata Atsutane and brings to our immediate "gaze" a living individual of the era.⁶⁴ Platt's recent article on three generations of Tokugawa village elites brings home the cultural, social and economic environments as they affected the lives of persons and generations, rather than exploring class or strata structures.⁶⁵ In sum, the study of the people of Tokugawa Japan now prefers nuanced emphasis on the human element rather than analysis of social structures as fundamental category with which to interpret documents from the age. The bold analytical conceptualisations of the Norman and Smith generation of historians derived their precision from the discourse of the great nineteenth-century theoretical tradition in the social sciences. Today, neither Marxian theory and approaches nor Modernist agendas derived from Parsons or Weber survive in the same convincing form. Regardless of the differences of opinion among the early post-war generation, their common purpose was to explain the problematic relationship of late feudal society to modern Japan. Compared to that older generation, new social and economic research takes the Tokugawa age and its processes into the future in a relatively noncommittal manner *vis-a-vis* problems of modernity. Yet, while the bold analytical debate about the past and the present of modern Japan appears to have receded, the people of Tokugawa Japan have begun to have a history of their own. We can confidently state that the "People" of Tokugawa Japan are being "empowered" as actors by today's scholars. They now are perceived to behave autonomously of a Whig role, if not independent of it. We have just begun to see them on their own terms, acting on the historical environment of early modernity in a way that has a distinct character of its own, and is not intentionally a preparation for a future "modern."

⁶⁴ John Breen, "Nativism Restored," *Monumenta Nipponica* 55:3 (2000): 438.

⁶⁵ Brian W. Platt, "Elegance, Prosperity, Crisis: Three Generations of Tokugawa Village Elites," *Monumenta Nipponica* 55:1 (2000): 45-82.

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